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ENG 5009-001: Transatlantic Literary Culture

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Eastern Illinois University

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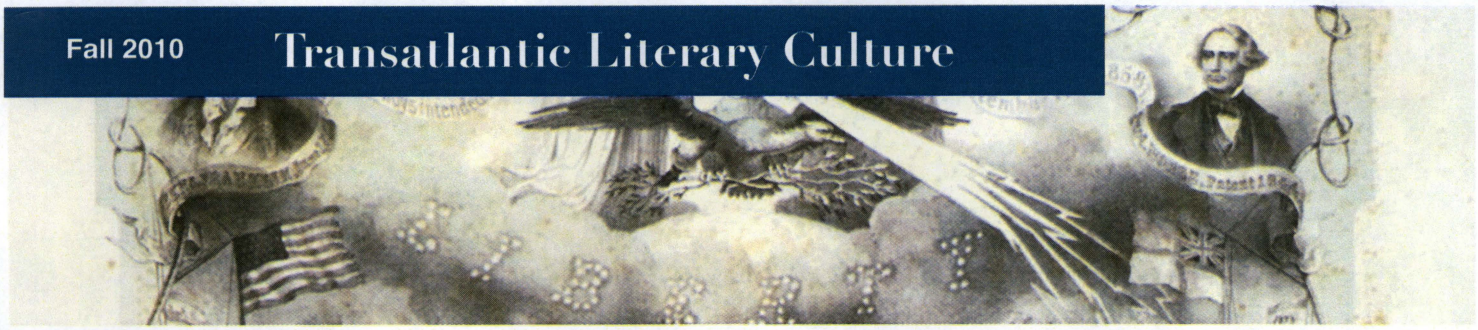
Transatlantic Literary Culture



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Office Hours: T, R 8-9 am, W 6-7 pm

Over the past decade in Americanist literary scholarship, the national boundaries separating "American" from "British" literature have eroded considerably. While literary education and research in the United States once took for granted an Atlantic barrier dividing a single linguistic community into two national traditions, the very practitioners who were trained under this regimen now routinely flout it, writing articles, books, and syllabi that posit instead a singular if complex North Atlantic cultural entity comprised of British and American discursive production and reception. About this apparent Atlantic elision I would say this, however: if in the end the point of the shift seems simply to provide another way of describing the same canons, methods, and intellectual histories that preexisted "transatlantic studies," that critical orientation will rightly go the way of poststructuralism, reader-response criticism, or the myriad other schools of thought that once flashed in the pan only to sizzle out unceremoniously. So one of the questions facing us this semester should be: what is the real payoff, the cash value, of reading in the transatlantic frame of mind? Why bother doing so? What does it help us to see that we would not otherwise have discerned?

Now over the course of the semester I hope we'll each develop our own ways of dealing with such questions, but here at our opening moment I'll offer you my working hypothesis (you'll help me change it, I hope, over the course of our conversation). Right now, my hunch is that viewing mid-nineteenth-century literary culture in ways *not* proscribed by the model of the insular Nation-state—that is, viewing that culture instead as it emerged within that more complex North Atlantic cultural entity I mention above—tends us toward a recognition of multiple points of resemblance between the Anglophone North Atlantic of that period and of our own. These points of resemblance map out the constellation of a massive shift, something big under way, something emergent only within the last five or six years. This is a period during which more truly instantaneous communication technology has eradicated all sorts of distance; during which the efficacy of the Nation-state as the dominant mode of power has been called into question by the multinational corporate entities like BP or Morgan-Stanley, ostensibly stateless enterprises which are "too big to fail" and which therefore hold both the U.S. and British populaces in financial thrall; during which which alignments between citizen and Nation have entered a process of renegotiation announced in the rise of countercultural entities as diverse as the anti-globalization activists who descend upon the annual meetings of the World Trade Organization on the one hand, or, on the other, the Tea Party.

All of these circumstances bear upon a reconfigured "American" subjectivity here at the end of the long twentieth century, and all intersect with powerful precedents out of the Anglophone Atlantic, which among other things is an oceanic expanse made smaller by the advent of subaquaceous telegraphic technology; a commercial space under redefinition with the ascendency of Free Trade; and a political discourse community in which competing lexicons of dissent, from Chartism to Antislavery, sought to rebuild the social contract around various conceptions of the Rights of Man.

Course Requirements & Policies

In addition to completing all assigned readings and discussions, students will write a paper suitable for presentation at a conference or submission to a journal, approximately 18-20 pages long (50% of final grade). Students will also complete an annotated bibliography of scholarly sources dealing with some aspect of our general topic, a bibliography which will also help them to write an abstract describing a paper topic well before the essay's due date (25% of final grade). All students will also make one presentation, during which they will lead the class in a discussion of the implications of a journal article or chapter from a book dealing with our subject matter (25% of final grade). I will match each student with an article or chapter; report dates appear on the reading schedule.

Participation

I assume that everyone will appear weekly as strong class citizens, prepared and eager to participate energetically in a demanding discussion. As you surely know by now, participating well doesn't simply mean talking a lot—it means fostering a dialogue, frequently making comments showing that you are engaged in a process of careful reading and reconsideration of that already read, and showing that you are attuned to what others in the class say. Idle talk—the kind that simply does not indicate close engagement with the materials we'll be studying—does not help move the conversation forward, and hence does not qualify as participation.

Pecha Kucha

We're going to do presentations in this course, but I want to try something different than what I've used in the past. These presentations will follow the "pecha kucha" format of presentation, which makes for an extremely short presentation that is dense with information. What happens in pecha kucha is this: you speak, and while you're speaking, a series of 20 slides display behind you, for 20 seconds each. Thus, every pecha kucha presentation is exactly 6 minutes and 40 seconds long, and the most successful ones coordinate word and image in suggestive, intriguing ways. This is not easy, so far as I can tell. But I'm trying these out in order to avoid some pitfalls I've seen too many grad student stumble into: summarizing instead of analyzing, going on too long, reading text verbatim, not mastering material to the point necessary in order to speak extemporaneously, not having an actual point to make beyond summarizing a source or simply presenting what is already established, known. You'll get a couple of chances at these; we'll establish a schedule soon.

Attendance Policy

Don't miss class.

Late Assignments

Generally, I don't give extensions. That said, there are of course sometimes truly unavoidable, insurmountable circumstances that absolutely prevent a student from completing a paper on time. In such cases, students will provide a full account in writing, and I may then decide to give an extension. But note that in such instances, I will expect to see the extra time reflected in the final draft—assignments that have been given an extension are read with an even more demanding eye than those that have not. Lastly: in order to be granted an extension, students must contact me at least two days before the assignment's due date.

Required Texts:

Susan Manning and Edward Clark, eds., *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader*, 2007
All other readings supplied through Booth Library e-reserves and by students.

Reading Schedule

Obama and the BP Spill	Week 1	Introductions "Boris Johnson attacks America's 'anti-British rhetoric' on BP," *The Sunday Times* (London), 10 June 2010 "Barack Obama's BP Brit-bashing could harm US-UK relations," *The Telegraph,* 14 June 2010 "Barack Obama is playing dirty over BP. That's probably a good thing," *The Guardian,* 14 June 2010 Hendrick Hertzberg, "Spilled Oil," *The New Yorker,* 28 June 2010 Richard Cobden, Letters to Charles Sumner, 1848-65
Transatlantic Romance	Week 2	Elizabeth Peabody, letters to William Wordsworth (1825-45) Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Carlyle, selected correspondence (1834-64) Richard Chase, from *The American Novel and its Tradition* (1980) Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor, "Introduction: What Is Transatlantic Literary Studies?" *TLS*, 1-13
Geographies: Nature and the Picturesque	Week 3	William Gilpin, from *Three Essays On Picturesque Beauty* (1792) Humphrey Repton, from *Sketches And Hints On Landscape Gardening* (1795) Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836) Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden* (1854) Richard Gravel, "Nature and *Walden*," *TLS*, 105-110
	Week 4	Gilpin, from *Observations on Several Parts of England* (1772) Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* (1794) John Pendleton Kennedy, *Swallow Barn* (selections, 1852 ed.) Robert Weisbuch, "Cultural Time in England and America," *TLS,* 97-104

Free Trade	Week 5	William Gilmore Simms, *Atalantis* (1832, 1852) Henry Timrod, "The Cotton-Boll" (1860) Timrod, "Ethnogenesis" (1861) John Calhoun, "Fort Hill Address" (1831) John Henry Hammond, "Cotton Is King" (1858)
	Week 6	Richard Cobden, Speech in the House of Commons, 27 February 1846 Cobden, Letters to Charles Sumner, 1848-65 Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Choral Ode" (1862) John Bright, "America and England" (1863) Cobden, Speech at Rochdale, 24 November 1863 Goldwin Smith, "England and America," *The Atlantic*, December 1864
	Week 7	Emerson, "Wealth" (1851) Emerson, "Wealth" (1860) Emerson, "The Fortune of the Republic" (1863) Robert A. Gross, "The Transnational Turn: Rediscovering American Studies in a Wider World," *TLS* 31-34
Atlantic Nativity	Week 8	Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Custom-House" Hawthorne, "Consular Experiences" Hawthorne, "Hester at her Needle" J. Hillis Miller, "English Romanticism, American Romanticism: What's the Difference?" *TLS,* 89-96
	Week 9	Hawthorne, *The Ancestral Footstep* Hawthorne, *Grimshawe* Donald E. Pease, "National Narratives, Postnational Narration," *TLS*, 39-43
Saxon Slaves	Week 10	Frederick Douglass, Address at Canandaigua (2 August, 1847) Lydia Maria Child, "The Black Saxons" (1841) Wendell Phillips, Speech at Faneuil Hall, 25 March 1850 (reprinted in *Liberator*, 29 March 1850) Justice Peleg Sprague, "Constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Law" (reprinted as "Refuge of Oppression" in *Liberator*, 20 June 1851) Proceedings of the U.S. Senate, *Congressional Globe,* 26 June 1854 Charles Sumner, "The Demands of Freedom," from *The National Era*, February 1855

	Week 11	Henry Herbert, *Wager of Battle* (1855; access through Google Books) Wai Chee Dimock, "Deep Time: American Literature and World History," *TLS,* 160-64 Abstract for final project due; we'll discuss in class
The Transatlantic Telegraph	Week 12	"The Great Atlantic Telegraph," from *John Bull and Britannia,* 27 July 1857 Telegraphic Messages from Queen Victoria and President Buchanan (published in *John Bull and Britannia,* 23 August 1858) *Effect of the Submarine Telegraph* (lithograph, 1850) *The Laying of the Cable* (lithograph, 1858) *Torchlight Procession Around the World* (lithograph, 1858) *The Atlantic Telegraph* (lithograph, 1858) "The Song of the Telegraph" (1853) Proceedings of the U.S. Senate, *Congressional Globe* (22 January, 1857) Speech of Andrew Butler, *Congressional Globe* (12 June, 1856) Speech of Wendell Philips, *Liberator* (30 January 1857) Christopher Cranch, "An Evening with the Telegraph Wires" (1858) Walt Whitman, "A Word Out of the Sea" (1860)
Brönte, Brown	Week 13	Charlotte Brönte, *Jane Eyre* (1847)
	Week 14	William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853; access through Google Books)
	Week 15	Final Essays due, beginning of class